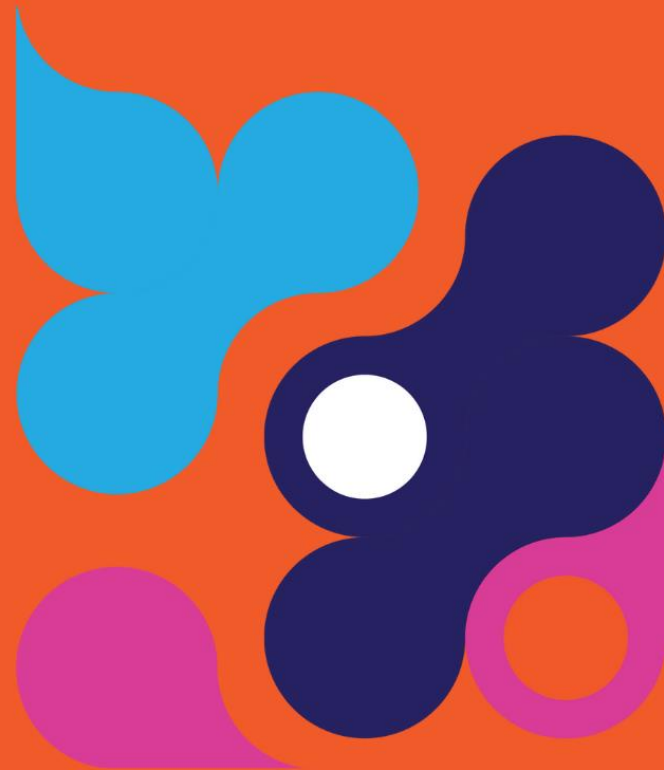




2022 Report on Local Content and Services

SAS Community Outreach

FY22 : July 2021 - June 2022



(1) Describe your overall goals and approach to address identified community issues, needs, and interests through your station's vital local services, such as multi-platform long and short-form content, digital and in-person engagement, education services, community information, partnership support, and other activities, and audiences you reached or new audiences you engaged.

In December 2022, WFDD listener Vikram K. contributed to the 14th annual WFDD BackPack Campaign, a collaborative fundraiser that brings in dollars to support WFDD and its mission, but that also helps to alleviate the significant issue of childhood food insecurity in our region. Accompanying the donation was this comment: "Public Radio is a wonderful gift to our society with its motivation to provide unbiased news and education. The backpack campaign is a way for the society to give back and support each other. Thanks to WFDD [for] bringing us together."

The donor's comment gets at the heart of what WFDD is all about—bringing the community together. We do that in myriad ways: by providing robust local news coverage, even more essential in the wake of the implosion of our own local newspapers; by creating opportunities for our listeners to meet and interact with one another through events like our Book Club, Community Conversations, and more; and by creating, through our Hive® youth education program, various opportunities for young people to learn the craft of radio journalism and share their unique perspective.

All these efforts are designed to demonstrate that to which we aspire: to be much more than just radio; to be a lighthouse for our community; to create connections and empower our listeners with trustworthy information. Interwoven in all of that is a commitment to serving our entire community, to ensuring that we are building trust and developing connections with underserved populations in our coverage area. This is core to our overarching vision and to fulfilling our public service mission to inform, connect, educate, and inspire.

(2) Describe key initiatives and the variety of partners with whom you collaborated, including other public media outlets, community nonprofits, government agencies, educational institutions, the business community, teachers and parents, etc. This will illustrate the many ways you're connected across the community and engaged with other important organizations in the area.

Ensuring we are adequately covering issues related to underserved communities within our region is key to our values and mission, so we were fortunate to be the recipient of a grant from Report for America to help us fund the salary of a bilingual reporter in our newsroom. Eileen Rodriguez joined WFDD in June 2021, specifically to report on Covid and the Hispanic and Latinx communities, which were disproportionately affected by the pandemic. We further benefited from a partnership with regional Spanish language publication *La Noticia*. Not only do they help to fund Eileen's position, they also share Eileen's reporting, allowing this important work to reach an even wider audience.

Beyond that, our local news team continues to increase its coverage, working on more long-form investigative pieces and finding ways to fill the gaps left by shrinking local print journalism. It is a responsibility we feel the weight of daily. An informed public is an empowered public, and a protected public, and as a main source of freely accessible trustworthy news in our area, we know how vital it is that we continue to grow our reporting. When the Winston Weaver Fertilizer Plant erupted in flames the night of January 31st, 2022, our news team leapt into action, starting a live blog to keep residents informed, reporting on the evacuation zone and air quality in the area, and bringing to light issues of spatial inequity and justice. The Winston Weaver Fertilizer Plant, which at the time of the fire housed an estimated 600



tons of potentially explosive ammonium nitrate, was located in an area home to a primarily low-income minority population. The fire was not contained for many days, leaving these residents homeless; official communications about when they would be able to return home were unclear or not provided in languages other than English; and they were provided few resources on which to live until it was safe to return home. Further, communication about relief funds was poor, and WFDD reporters uncovered that one year later, 70% of the relief funds remain unclaimed. This type of coverage is essential to holding government officials accountable, and not just keeping the community's most vulnerable residents safe, but providing them the information they need to be able to advocate for themselves and their needs.

To educate is part of our mission. Hive®, our youth education program, continues to prove that understanding the viewpoint of young people has value. The mission of this multi-tiered initiative is to give young people the skills, the tools, and the platform to share their unique perspective — to open a window into the world (and worldview) of the youth of our community. Through Hive® we're able to connect with parents, teachers, and students across the community. FY22 marked the fifth year of our partnership with R. J. Reynolds High School, where we offer Radio 101 as a for-credit, honors class. Students in the Fall 2021 class worked on a 7-part series on youth mental health titled *Dispatches From Within*. These compelling and insightful pieces tackled an overarching issue that is universally seen as dire, particularly post-pandemic, and covered topics including self-harm, body image, substance use, racial inequities in access to mental health care, the stigmatization of mental health issues, and more. Through a partnership with American Public Media, Call To Mind, the Well Beings Tour, and filmmakers John Jordan and Gregg Jamback, we were able to present a livestreamed conversation with experts and student reporters about some of the topics covered in this series, extending the reach of this series. Additionally, the series was edited into an hour-long special, which was broadcast on WFDD, WAMU, and KOSU. The individual story on body image and the effects of social media was broadcast on *Here & Now*.

Developing an emotional connection with listeners through meaningful engagement initiatives is a key focus for WFDD. There is more to this than simply providing events and activities for people to attend. Community and listener engagement is part of our attempt to combat the spread of mis- and disinformation. It is also an effort to increase fundraising revenue and reach new donors.

We know that mis- and disinformation spreads rampantly on social media because users share information shared by their friends—because they trust that their friends won't mislead them. Our engagement initiatives have an end goal of developing a relationship with our listeners such that they think of us as a trusted friend, hopefully making them much more likely to share out information we provide. We also know that giving comes from the heart, not the head...so we strive to make a deep connection and get to know our audience. We do this because we truly care about our community and we value the relationship we have with our listeners, but we also know that that connection is what leads to giving. And increased funding leads to more public service.

Making that connection comes from understanding our listeners' needs and demonstrating that we care about the things they do. To that end, we've continued some of our key engagement activities, like our Photo of the Week and Photo of the Year, our weekly Dose of Good email, and our Be Still Campaign, which is a series of 30-second relaxation spots broadcast throughout the day on WFDD. Listeners have responded so positively to these messages and tell us they feel it's something everyone in our community needs. Thanks to strong community partnerships, we were able to expand our Photo of the Year celebration, taking the gallery exhibit from the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem to Blowing Rock Art and History Museum, located in the High Country of North Carolina. This allowed even more people to see the photo submissions from WFDD listeners and to vote on their choice for Photo of the Year. Additionally, we launched some new initiatives, including a celebration of National Poetry Month, which provided writing prompts and resulted in a published collection of listener-written poems; and WFDD Listener Expeditions, which take small groups of listeners on explorations of lesser-



known locations around our coverage area. Our first Listener Expedition was chosen in honor of Black History Month and took attendees on a walk through Guilford Woods to the Underground Railroad Tree, located in what is believed to be the southernmost terminus of the Underground Railroad, thanks to partnerships with the Friends Center at Guilford College and professors at UNC-Greensboro. The second Listener Expedition was done in partnership with Stokes County Economic Development and Hanging Rock State Park, and took attendees on an exploration of a historic mineral springs resort.

(3) What impact did your key initiatives and partnerships have in your community? Describe any known measurable impact, such as increased awareness, learning, or understanding about particular issues. Describe indicators of success, such as connecting people to needed resources or strengthening conversational ties across diverse neighborhoods. Did a partner see an increase in requests for related resources? Please include direct feedback from a partner(s) or a person(s) served.

Education continues to be a priority for WFDD. In FY22, our Hive® program served nearly 100 students ranging from middle school to adult, and representing a broad array of races, ethnicities, religions, and abilities. Beyond teaching the basic tenets of journalism, this initiative helps participants hone writing and communication skills—knowledge that provides lifetime benefits. During the 2021 fall semester, our R. J. Reynolds High School Radio 101 class tackled a serious subject: the crisis surrounding youth mental health. These students created and distributed a survey to teachers across the entire Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school district, which garnered over 1,600 responses from students. From the survey responses, they found commonalities and determined which issues were the most vital to cover. The result was a 7-part series and one-hour special titled *Dispatches From Within*, which pulled back the curtain on various issues related to mental health that our young people face today. There has been a lot of coverage of this topic in the national media, but most often from the adult perspective. We believe that hearing directly from young people about their experiences and challenges is important and informative and brings credence to the subject. Because of the work these young people did, listeners both locally and nationally gained an inside understanding of the struggles our young people are facing. We were honored that the series received multiple journalism awards, which is indicative of the importance and timeliness of the topic, and of the caliber of work the students did.

R. J. Reynolds High School Principal Calvin D. Freeman shared these comments: “The Radio 101 class is a place where students can explore subjects that have an impact on their daily lives. As such, students get the opportunity to unpack subjects that make their world real and relevant to them. This is learning in its purest form, and I am glad that Mr. Maisonnave provides direction and allows freedom for discovery and thought. The work the students have done is a pride point for our school and we are really excited and proud for them. I look forward to continued greatness!”

And senior Sarah Bettis said, “Participating in the Radio 101 class gave me the opportunity to use my voice. Helping to create ‘I’m Fat, I’m Ugly, and I’m Stupid’ allowed me to learn a lot about an issue that is important to me and many of my peers. I think the unique and life changing thing about having a high school program like Radio 101 was the sheer number of people we were able to reach with our story. I will always remember the importance of speaking up about issues I care about and that even if I can’t fix the issues myself just talking about them can help other people.”

Our partnership with Report for America (RFA) and *La Noticia*, providing a dedicated reporter to cover the Latino and Hispanic community, has had a significant impact in our ability to direct focus to reporting on this important population in our region, one disproportionately affected by Covid, and one with significant contributions to our broadcast area. Our RFA corps member was able to produce two feature stories per



month, in both English and Spanish, all specifically focused on the Hispanic and Latino community. Topics included the work of churches to help keep residents safe during the pandemic; mobile home tenants facing eviction; celebrations of Dia de Muertos that honor culture, tradition, and those who are no longer here; a pain management app being developed for the Latino community; and more.

Hilda Gurdian, Publisher, *La Noticia*, shared these comments about the impact of this initiative: "Our partnership with WFDD has allowed us to cover stories that we would have been unable to cover on our own. These are important stories about issues affecting the Latino community that if we did not cover them, they would go untold. For *La Noticia* it is a great way to access the human and technical resources needed to cover in greater depth the topics that interest and affect our community, thus fulfilling our commitment to maintain high quality journalism with community impact. It also provides more visibility to the issues affecting the Latino community among members of the community at-large. The partnership has been highly successful for WFDD and *La Noticia*. It has allowed us each to expand our coverage at a fraction of the cost of doing it alone. We both believe in equitable collaborations, and that's the foundation on which we built our partnership."

In December 2021, we held our 13th annual December Backpack Campaign, a collaborative fundraiser we do in partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina and Kaplan Early Learning Company. We hold this fund drive every year because childhood food insecurity continues to be a significant issue in our region. The synergy between the Food Bank's Backpack Program, which provides weekend meals to children facing food insecurity, and Kaplan, a company whose mission is to foster the mental, physical, and social health of children, is natural. During this annual campaign, our corporate partner donates a backpack full of food to the Backpack Program for each gift to 88.5 WFDD. Our goal for the December 2021 campaign was 1,300 gifts of support for WFDD and 1,300 backpacks of food for the Food Bank's Backpack Program. Not only does the campaign raise awareness of the fact that our area has one of the highest instances of childhood food insecurity in the nation, but it also raises essential support for 88.5 WFDD, and brings the community together to help alleviate childhood hunger in our region. Since its inception 13 years prior, this collaborative fundraising campaign has resulted in the donation of 12,900 backpacks — over 64,000 meals for children at risk of going hungry.

(4) Please Describe any efforts (e.g., programming, production, outreach activities) you have made to investigate and/or meet the needs of minority and other diverse audiences (including, but not limited to, new immigrants, people for whom English is a second language and illiterate adults) during Fiscal Year 2021, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2022. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the languages broadcast.

Serving our entire community, including underserved and underrepresented populations is key to our mission and vision. For that reason, we embarked on two initiatives to aid us in more outreach to minority populations.

In FY22, with the launch of a new website, we instituted mandatory source tracking. We can now download quarterly reports showing the demographic makeup of our story sources, which will guide us through ensuring that we are utilizing experts and sources in a way that is representative of the demographic makeup of our community as a whole.

We were also fortunate to be the recipient of grants from the North Carolina Local News Lab Fund and Report for America (RFA), and to establish a partnership with the largest Spanish language publication in our region, *La Noticia*, which resulted in the addition of a bilingual reporter to our newsroom staff, whose



beat was initially Covid-19 and its disproportionate effect on our Hispanic and Latinx communities, as well as what recovery from the pandemic looks like in those communities. This RFA corps member is now focused strictly on the Hispanic and Latinx communities and works with editors at both media outlets. Her stories are published by both entities, providing even broader reach for this important reporting, and introducing WFDD to new populations.

And our Hive® Education Program continues to present opportunities to reach a diverse population. We have a Radio 101 class embedded at R. J. Reynolds High School in Winston-Salem, an arts magnet school with students from 38 countries, speaking 26 languages, making it the most diverse high school in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school system. Our after-school option is open to students from the entire school district (and neighboring districts). And as reported in the previous section, a wide spectrum of races, ethnicities, religions, and abilities are represented among participants across all our Hive® initiatives. We are also always cognizant of providing content of importance to diverse groups. In FY22, our Radio 101 class reported on the youth mental health crisis, including a look at racial disparities in access to mental health services and what it's like to navigate the school system as a transgender student.

(5) Please assess the impact that your CPB funding had on your ability to serve your community. What were you able to do with your grant that you wouldn't be able to do if you didn't receive it?

The generous grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting allows us to dream big and turn our energies toward innovative outreach and engagement initiatives, including our youth education program, which serves as more than a vehicle for teaching radio journalism to young people...it injects passion for storytelling and communication into participants, turning them into champions and advocates for public broadcasting, and raising awareness of this medium amongst a population for whom it may not already be top of mind.

This grant allows us to explore ways to extend our service, and to do more and be more for our community. It is in our DNA to be more than just radio, and it is thanks to the support from CPB that we are able to do that.

